

Notes on the White-breasted Wood-Swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*).—A number of visits to the north gave the following records.

Onslow. September 26, 1953. Two birds were seen on the first day, and on the next a family party with 2 large young on the wing were noted.

Port Samson. September 29, 1953. A flock of about 500 birds were seen about 5 p.m. circling over the mangroves near the port.

Onslow. September 30, 1954. While walking ashore about 6 a.m. I saw a White-breasted Wood-Swallow on a wire attached to the jetty. It called as though nesting and on examining the nearest fire bucket attached to a post, I found a nest with three eggs. The nest was on a coil of rope and made entirely of grass stalks. It was fairly substantial being about 50 mm. deep and 50 mm. across. There was no lining. The eggs measured 22.9 x 17.4 mm., 22.0 x 17.3 mm., and 23.5 x 17.5 mm., and were creamy white, sparingly blotched with reddish brown; a ring of blotches occurred near the larger end. One of the birds stopped on the edge of the bucket until I was within three yards. Then a second bird appeared and both perched on the wire. The crew of the ship reported that Wood-Swallows had been nesting in the same bucket since 1943.

—VINCENT SERVENTY, Subiaeo.

Fork-tailed Swifts over Cockburn Sound and Rottnest Island.—While travelling by boat from Fremantle to Rottnest on March 16, 1955, we observed swifts (*Apus pacificus*) on three occasions. The first, a loose flock of five birds, was seen at 11.45 a.m., 4½ miles off Fremantle, working their way slowly northwards at heights between five and fifty feet above the sea. Five miles from Fremantle another two flew northwards past the ship. At 12.06 p.m. two more swifts, soon followed by another, passed towards the north when we were nearly nine miles from Fremantle and three from Rottnest.

There was little doubt that these swifts were feeding. Throughout the morning a hot north-easterly was blowing off the mainland, which could well have carried insects far out to sea. This belief is supported by our observation of three Welcome Swallows hawking over the sea nearly a mile and a half from Rottnest.

Three days later, on the morning of March 19, the species was observed over the eastern part of Rottnest. The greatest number seen at any one time was about 200, spread out in feeding flocks of 20-100 birds. One of these flocks was at least 500 feet above the ground, the birds sailing round and round what seemed to be an up-draught of warm air. At the same time a smaller and looser flock was feeding at about 100 feet above the ground; the flight of these birds consisted of 3-20 rapid flaps alternating with gliding. The swifts called continuously, a thin, drawn-out, insect-like 'tzwee'. All these birds were seen in the vicinity of the airstrip, Government House Lake, Serpentine Lake, and Lake Herschell, between 10.15 and 10.40 a.m. Their overall movement was slowly to the north.

The weather was constant throughout this period — fine and hot, with a strong land-breeze in the morning, weakening as it

swung through north at noon, and dying down in the northwest in the afternoon.

The conspicuous white rump and long tail (the fork is not always discernible) separates this species in the field from the heavier and short-tailed Spine-tailed Swift, which has not yet been satisfactorily identified in this State.

—G. M. STORR, Floreat Park, and G. M. DUNNET, Nedlands.

Occurrences of the Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*).—

This tern is regarded as being rare in Western Australia. Serventy and Whittell (*Handbook of Birds of Western Australia, 2nd ed.*, p. 128) say "This is one of the fresh-water terns, but may occur also on estuaries and sea-coasts. It appears to be quite rare in Western Australia and has never been reported in the South-west." The following occurrences seem worth putting on record.

Carnarvon. July 8, 1952. Two Gull-billed Terns were seen near the Railway Bridge. As this was my first acquaintance with the bird I passed them by at first as Crested Terns until their habit of hawking for food over the sandy beach and mud flats drew my attention. Then the short, strong, black beak and all black head served to identify them.

Carnarvon. September 27, 1953. Two black-headed and five grey-headed birds, with black around the eye, were seen hawking over the sand in the same place as the previous year. The following calls were heard. First a single-noted shrill call. The black-headed birds also gave a harsh call reminiscent of that of the Roseate Tern. The grey-headed birds appeared to be soliciting the black-headed for food so giving the impression they were young birds. The whole party rose from the sand and, uttering harsh alarm rattles, attacked a Red-backed Sea Eagle.

Carnarvon. October 24, 1952. Four Gull-billed Terns were seen in the same spot as in previous years. Only one had a black cap. Again the harsh chatter and shrill single call were heard. The birds were hawking for food over the sand near the water's edge.

Morawa, August 16, 1953. Six Gull-billed Terns were seen flying over a fresh-water lake about two miles west of the town. All had black heads with no white showing on the forehead. The harsh chattering call was again heard. Later in the same day another party of 18 birds was seen.

It would seem the birds are in much the same category as the Banded Stilts, moving over the country to sites where food is plentiful and nesting in much the same fashion as the Stilt. Serventy and Whittell give only one nesting record for Western Australia and, owing to the rarity of the birds, nesting sites are likely to be found by accident rather than design.

—VINCENT SERVENTY, Subiaco.

Pellet Production in *Corvus*.—The regurgitation of the indigestible materials swallowed in the food of eagles, hawks, and owls in the form of coherent pellets has been well studied. Though pellets are known to be produced by members of several other